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## CHARACTERS

**GABBY:** 17, female.

**PETER:** 17, male.

## TIME

*The present.*

## SETTING

*Any suburban high school. Anywhere that there are suburban high schools.*

*A high school bathroom. Muffled eighties music, a la Bon Jovi's "Livin' on a Prayer," almost drowns out the sounds of a young woman crying in the stalls. Almost, but not quite. The bathroom door opens halfway, the music flooding the space. PETER peeks his head in.*

**PETER:** Gabby? Gab, you in there?

*Crying. PETER slowly works himself into the bathroom, allowing the door to close behind him. He is dressed in a rental tux. His cheeks are flush, but there's something incredibly electric about him. He's shining.*

Gabby? Gab? Mrs. Marks is out there rockin' out to "Livin' on a Prayer" and I thought you should see it. It's really a sight to behold.

*Beat. He works his way further in and leans against the sink.*

You know this one? When I was a kid, I really loved this song . . . my dad would take my brothers and me roller skating on Saturdays to this place that would only play seventies and eighties music, and they would play this song and I would just fly around the place, you know, like I was the only one out there. Practically doing air guitar and all that. This song really used to rock. It sucks that it's turned into this drunk-college-boy-douchebag thing. *Beat.* Anyway, I thought that I would come in here and join you, you know, find my date and make sure that she's okay. Gab? "Tony the Tiger" was asking for you. *Joking.* Gabby's ggggrrreeeeeeEEEEAAAATTTTT!

**GABBY:** Go away, Peter!

**PETER:** Gabby . . .

**GABBY:** Go away, you asshole.

PETER: Gab . . .

GABBY: Don't call me Gab!

PETER: What am I supposed to call you? Gabby, then? *No answer.* Gabrielle?

*Sounds it out as "Gab-ree-elle?" with bad French accent:*

Gab-ree-elle, come vees me, we make bee-you-tee-ful music en Parees by zee reever . . . *Silence.* I'm sorry. Bad timing.

GABBY: *Tearful, pleading.* Please go away, Peter. Please? Go. Away.

PETER: I . . . I'm sorry, Gab.

GABBY: I told you not to call me that!

PETER: What am I supposed to call you? That's how I know you—that's all I know. Gab. Not Gabby, not Gabrielle, just . . .

GABBY: No, you obviously don't know me. You—sycophant!

*Beat.*

PETER: Wait, what? What did you just call me?

GABBY: Syco—sorry. Regents. It means . . .

PETER: I know what it means. I just wanted you to say something other than "Go away" or "Stop."

GABBY: You're a liar. Like, this ridiculously huge fucking liar!

PETER: I'm so, so sorry, Gab. I feel terrible. You have no idea.

GABBY: Whatever. It didn't look like you were feeling terrible. It actually really looked like you were enjoying yourself!

PETER: Okayyyy . . . well, if we're going to have this conversation, would you at least consider coming out of the stall?

*Beat.*

GABBY: I can't.

PETER: What do you mean, you can't?

GABBY: I can't, Peter. I look like a, whatever, a zombie or something. Go away.

PETER: What are you talking about?

GABBY: How can you be this dense? I'm crying? My makeup is running, you moron. My eyes have these huge, dark circles around them.

PETER: I'm sure it's fine.

GABBY: It's not fine, Peter. It's not fine at all. Don't be so oblivious. Do you have any clue how much money I spent on this stupid dress? This, stupid . . . hair? My aunt had her friend from Mary Kay do my makeup . . . it's all over my face now. I look like, like, "The Walking Dead."

PETER: What's wrong with that? We like that show.

GABBY: They're dead, Peter!

PETER: Okay, yeah, but we still like the show. Come out. Please? Come out so we can talk.

*A long beat. Gabby comes out. She does look a little "Walking Dead-ish," but is undeniably pretty.*

See? It's not so bad.

GABBY: Why are you such a liar?

*Scratches at her wrist.*

This thing is really irritating me!

*She tears her corsage off and throws it at him.*

Take this! It's probably poison ivy or something.

*Beat. She glares at him.*

Tell me.

PETER: Gab . . .

GABBY: Don't "Gab" me. You don't deserve it.

PETER: What do you want me to say?

GABBY: You wanted me out here, so say something. Say anything. Just don't stand there with that stupid dopey look on your face.

PETER: *Painfully sincere.* I'm sorry.

GABBY: Accepted. Go away.

PETER: Don't do that. I mean, don't be . . . like that.

GABBY: Every day, I see these girls—pretty girls, smart girls, like my friends, my sisters, their friends—all these girls surrounded by these stupid, selfish, asshole boys. I see all of these girls get treated like shit every single day, and just, take it. Day in, day out, just take this bullshit nonsense. And every day it made me more and more determined not to be like that. Me, thinking, "No way that's

going to happen to me." Like, absolutely determined not to fall into that stupid boy trap, thinking, no way am I planning my free time and weekends and life around these stupid boys. I have spent a great deal of time avoiding these situations, because I see. I see that it's not permanent, that these guys just run around and try to say the right things and do the right things trying to, whatever, make out or cop a feel or get in your pants and all that. And I'm like, Not Me. No way. *Beat.* And then you. You come along and don't push. You're sweet. You're smart. Funny. You can hold a conversation that's not about video games or sports. You notice when I'm wearing something different. When I get my hair cut or wear it a different way. You like, respect me and treat me nice and . . .

*She turns away.*

God this sounds so stupid!

PETER: No, it doesn't.

GABBY: It's so different than anything I've ever seen from anyone else. I have never seen anyone else get treated the way you have treated me. So, I, whatever, let you in? I let you in. And now . . . now I randomly catch you kissing Tommy Miller in the Chem Lab. *Beat.* So you're gay. Whatever. That's fine. I feel stupid that I was too naïve to catch on before, but okay, whatever. Proms are supposed to be momentous occasions. This has certainly been a momentous occasion.

*Beat. She turns to him, direct.*

But I have to suspect that you knew about this long before I did. I don't believe that this was some, what, random, freak occurrence.

PETER: . . . No. It wasn't.

GABBY: So what was I to you? Huh? Was I, like, some sort of experiment? Some like, barometer for heterosexuality? A human litmus test?

PETER: No.

GABBY: Then what, Peter? And don't try to hide behind some stupid bullshit excuse because if you do I'll come over there and take that stupid flower off your lapel and stab you in the ear with it.

PETER: I don't know, I can't . . .

GABBY: Because if you were—and I have to believe that you were

because you can't seem to even attempt to placate me with some semblance of an excuse—if you were using me as some test, that makes you slime. Because you knew. And you used me. And that makes you worse than any dumb guy, worse than slime. That makes you shit. *Beat.* So look at me. Look at me and promise me that you weren't using me like that.

*Silence. She stares at him, then throws her hands up in exasperation.*

GABBY: Happy Prom, Peter.

*She moves to exit. PETER blocks her. She moves again, he blocks her again.*

Will you move, please?

PETER: No. I won't.

GABBY: *Flush.* Why not? You want me to make an even bigger fool of myself? Okay, here goes: I love you. Loved you.

PETER: You don't love me, Gabby.

GABBY: Don't tell me what I feel!

PETER: You like me. A lot probably. But not love. Like.

GABBY: You have no idea what's in my head. You make me sick.

PETER: I'm sorry.

GABBY: You should be. I want to throw up right now. On you. I feel so stupid! God, I am so stupid!

PETER: You're not stupid.

GABBY: Oh no? You don't think so? Well let's confirm it, then. In addition to having you be the first person—besides immediate family—to say . . . that . . . to, there's more. Tonight? After Prom? I wanted to . . . *Indicates with a shrug.* . . . with you.

PETER: We haven't even kissed.

GABBY: I know that. I thought you were . . . being . . . a gentleman. *Beat.* Whatever, it's so, stupid and corny and traditional and all that, but it's . . . what I wanted.

*Beat. Looks at him.*

I love you.

PETER: *Softly.* Gabby? You don't love me. You don't. Maybe you

wanted to, but . . .

GABBY: Why are you doing this? Stop, just stop . . .

PETER: I think you already justified everything enough for both of us, but, whatever, let's get it out there. You're right, I was the first guy who came along and . . . said the right things . . . complimented you, made you feel pretty and funny and smart, made you feel special . . . made you feel good . . . And I want you to know that I didn't mean to . . . no, wait, that's wrong, I meant to, but I didn't mean to, mean to . . . like, I meant to make you feel good, but I wasn't trying to hurt you, I think is what I mean. No, I know. I mean . . .

GABBY: Stop it.

PETER: Why is it that every time I try to make sense of something I end up making it worse? What the fuck is wrong with me? It's like, like I have this incredible gift for saying the most horribly wrong things at the wrong times.

GABBY: Ya think?

PETER: This isn't going to make much sense . . .

GABBY: None of this has made much sense.

PETER: This isn't going to make much sense to you because this doesn't make much sense to me, but I'm going to say it because if I stop to think about it I might not ever say it. Okay? So just let me talk and then we'll deal with the aftermath.

*Takes a breath, begins.*

When I was eight, I caught my mom stuffing my Christmas stocking. Caught her red-handed, hand in the stocking, assorted trinkets in her other hand, no room for explanation. So at eight? No Santa—he's dead to me. So I know this—fact—there is no Santa. But even after that, even after I knew, I wanted so badly to believe in Santa that I, what, I tricked myself. For another three years I tricked myself. And now? We're here. But that's not all . . . you ready? Here goes . . . I love you, Gabby. I really do. When we started . . . dating . . . I kept thinking that things would, whatever, change and all that. That I would become attracted to who I am supposed to be attracted to. That didn't happen. And I'm sorry for that. But it doesn't change the fact that I love you, in spite of me, because of, because . . . you are the best person I know. The best.

There's no denying that. You are the best. And I am sorry, Gab. You have no idea how sorry I am that this happened tonight, of all nights. I never would have planned this, you have to understand that, never in a million years, because that would make me slime. It just happened. You have to believe that. *Beat.* But . . .

GABBY: I do . . .

PETER: *Snaps.* Let me finish! Sorry. I told you to let me finish.

GABBY: Sorry.

PETER: As I was saying . . . BUT . . . if there were ever going to be someone, a girl—no, a woman . . . it would . . . be you. And I don't mean that in some sort of, cereal box, consolation prize way, but in a way that's as honest as anything I can ever say. If there was? It would be you. Does that make sense? *Beat. Embarrassed.* Uhhh . . . maybe I should go now. I feel—really—stupid . . .

*He moves to exit. GABBY blocks his path.*

GABBY: Stop it, Peter. Okay? Stop. Don't be a stupid guy.

*Short beat. She smirks.*

Nice rom-com speech, by the way. Cheesy, but effective.

PETER: Which rom-com?

GABBY: Probably something with Bradley Cooper in it. He's hot.

PETER: He is hot!

*She hits him.*

Except when he dances with *The Hunger Games* chick. Then not so much.

*Laughter. A long beat. Teenage angst.*

PETER: So . . .

GABBY: Sew buttons.

PETER: What do we do?

GABBY: We go out there and pretend that this is . . .

PETER: Kiss me.

GABBY: What?

PETER: Kiss me. Please? Kiss me.

GABBY: I don't think so.

**CHAD BECKIM**

**PETER:** Remember what I said about the consolation prize? I meant that. But there's a very good chance that you may be the last woman I ever kiss. I want you to be the last woman I ever kiss. So . . . kiss me.

**GABBY:** After you kissed Tommy Miller? I don't think so.

*PETER moves to GABBY. She stands her ground. Both of them flush, nervous. PETER puts his hands awkwardly on her hips and leans in to kiss her. They bump heads.*

**PETER:** I'm sorry . . . that was . . .

*He turns to retreat. GABBY grabs his hand, pulls him back to her. She moves his hands to her waist, turns her head, lines herself up, and gently puts her hand on his face, and . . . they kiss.*

END OF PLAY

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## **THE LAST PARTY**

Emily Chadick Weiss

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